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Tant de négligence n'annonce pas un concours unanime aux mesures dont on a espéré la régénération de la prospérité publique. Il est difficile de juger comment un corps, dont les membres n'ont pas le même esprit parviendra à effectuer le bien que l'accord le plus parfait dans le Congrès ne pourroit procurer qu'avec le plus grand bonheur.

observation sur l'ancien
et le nouveau Congrès.

J'ai crû devoir vous faire connoître, Monseigneur, la fin d'un corps qui a joui par un concours singulier de circonstances et à la faveur de son grand éloignement de la partie de la terre qui seule s'occupoit avant la révolution Américaine de la voix de la renommée d'une réputation et d'une admiration, auxquelles il a bien mal répondu. Le début du corps qui le remplace ne m'a pas paru moins intéressant à constater. Si ce Colosse enfant s'élève, se fortifie et se maintient on reviendra avec intérêt sur ses commencemens. Si les vastes espérances des Américains ne sont point réalisées, ils ne recueilleront point le tribut général d'admiration qu'ils se donnent déjà à eux-mêmes et que d'après les événemens antérieurs et le sort de leur premier Gouvernement tant exalté on est très fondé à tenir encore en réserve. Si le corps formé par l'union Américaine acquiert de la vigueur, je dirai qu'il n'étoit que dérangé par des maladies guérissables. S'il ne sort pas de sa langueur je le regarderai comme gangrené et j'envisagerai sa dissolution. Les faits nous instruiront de la nature des maux, dont nous voyons les effets et nous feront apprécier la qualité des remèdes qu'on se dispose à employer.

Je suis avec respect

Monseigneur,

Votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur

LE C^{te} DE MOUSTIER.

2. *A Letter of Noah Webster to Daniel Webster, 1834.*

For the following letter the REVIEW is indebted to Mr. Worthington Chauncey Ford, of Washington, D. C. The original letter is in his possession.

NEW HAVEN, Sept. 6. 1834

Sir,

I understand by the public prints that you have been charged with saying, "Let Congress take care of the rich, the rich will take care of the poor." In reply to a letter from Mr. Brooks of Portland, you have contradicted the statement, by which it appears to be false and groundless. I confess, Sir, I am mortified that the propagation of such a calumny, and its reception by a portion of the people, should make it necessary for a gentleman of your character to deny the charge. I am

mortified that men can be found, in this country, *weak* enough to suppose you, or any respectable man, capable of the meanness which could dictate such a declaration, or *wicked* enough to propagate it, knowing it to be false. Yet it is not improbable our country contains multitudes of persons who may fall under both descriptions.

But, Sir, this is only a different form of expression, which I have known to be used, for more than half a century, to discredit the best men that ever adorned the councils of the United States. My age carries back my recollections farther than yours. In the year 1783, I commenced, as a political writer, a vindication of the measures of the Old Congress, in favor of the army. To make good the losses of the army by receiving depreciated bills in payment of their wages, and preventing a dissolution of the army, Congress granted to the officers half pay for life; which grant, to appease the popular clamor against *pensions*, was afterwards commuted for five years full pay. This grant roused an opposition among the more jealous republicans of that day, which agitated all New England, but was most violent in Connecticut, in which state it came near to cause a revolution. So unreasonable was this spirit of opposition, that the officers of the patriotic army, most of whom were nearly beggared by the loss of their wages, were represented as having enriched themselves by the war of the revolution. They were denounced as *rich* men and *aristocrats*, who had raised themselves to affluence upon the distresses of the people. The same low jealousy which now denounces the bank as a moneyed aristocracy, and rich men as the enemies of the poor, then assailed the brave men who hazarded their lives and property to defend their country, and to whom, under providence, the slanderers were indebted for their liberties, and to whom we owe the independence of the United States.¹

At that period, and after the present constitution of the U States went into operation, I devoted four or five years almost exclusively to the vindication of the measures of ² Congress and of the administration of Washington. My employment made it necessary for me to read all the public prints, and of course, to observe all the forms in which the popular jealousy appeared, and all the artifices of the opposers of Washington's administration, who were originally *anti-federalists*, and who, with one heart and all their influence opposed the adoption of the constitution. This party afterward took the title of *republican* or *democratic*, as being less odious than *antifederal*, and with equal unanimity, opposed the policy of General Washington, during his whole administration.

As early as the year 1783 or 1784, I became acquainted with the practice of exciting popular odium against public men, by propagating slanderous reports similar, in spirit, to that which you have contradicted.

¹ See also Noah Webster, *A Collection of Papers on Political, Literary and Moral Subjects* (New York, 1843), 316-321. Ed.

² For some time he wrote for the *Connecticut Courant*. He later, 1793, established in New York the *American Minerva*, subsequently the *New York Commercial Advertiser*. Ed.

The most common slander was that "*A B says the times will never be good, till the poor man is obliged to eat sheep's head and pluck; or a sheep's head and pluck are good enough for poor people.*" In the year 1783, when the opposers of the *commutation* act of Congress combined to dismiss, from the council, the members who had conducted us through the revolution, and who sustained the measures of congress, this slanderous report was circulated against the Hon. Oliver Wolcott of Litchfield, afterward governor of Connecticut, the first governor of that name. The slander had such effect in diminishing his popularity in Litchfield county, that had not the members of that body been chosen by the voters of the whole state, he would have lost his election. Yet from an acquaintance with that gentleman, I can affirm, there was not a more firm whig or upright and patriotic republican in the state.

The same or similar calumnies were circulated against other eminent statesmen. as against the Huntingtons in Norwich. Indeed I have frequently heard the same story told, with little variation for more than fifty years. It is revived, whenever an independent statesman, is to be driven from the public councils by a rival, or by popular jealousy.

You see then that the slanderous story which you have contradicted, is only a *new form* of an *old calumny*, proceeding from the same spirit of jealousy, which is as common as it is ill-founded.

That the poor should envy the rich, even when poverty is the effect of their own idleness and vices, is very natural; as it is immoral and absurd. What would become of the poor without the rich? How would they subsist, without employment, and how could they be employed, without the capital of the rich?

Who but the wealthy can pay the public expenses? Who can furnish the capital for canals, and railroads, and all other public improvements? The poor, without the aid of the wealthy, would *perish* or be doomed to the life of savages. The rich want the labor of the poor, and the poor must have the support of the rich. There is a mutual dependence, which ought to make the two classes *friends* to each other; and any attempt to make the poor hate the rich is of all the *low tricks* of demagogues the *meanest*, and *most detestable*.

The disposition to defame and libel political opponents is a rampant evil in the United States, and a proof of deep depravity. It appeared soon after the treaty of peace in 1783 had removed the dangers of the country; but broke out in all its violence in the attempts to turn the tide of popular favor from Gen. Washington and his federal friends, in 1793 and 1794.

When the French commenced the reform of their government, the people of this country generally felt a deep interest in their success; and it was hoped and believed that the French would establish a *republican government*, which many of our citizens have thought to be synonymous with a *free government*—an opinion not always verified by facts. When the French Minister Genet arrived in the United States, for the purpose of engaging this country in the war in union with France, a majority of

our citizens, certainly a majority in some of the States, wished that his intentions might be realized. They were ready and urgent to have our government join with France in the *war against tyrants*. The policy of Gen. Washington resisted this disposition ; he foresaw the danger of such an alliance, which might involve this country in interminable evils ; he determined, if possible, to preserve peace ; and his *popularity alone* enabled him to effect his purpose. Nothing but his *personal influence* prevented the success of Genet ; but it was doubtful, for several months, whether Washington or Genet should determine the policy of the United States.

At this time the antifederal party adhered to the policy of the French Minister ; and raised loud clamors against President Washington, who was denounced as a partisan of Great Britain, and his federal council and supporters were charged with an undue partiality for monarchy. Two newspapers,¹ one published in Philadelphia and the other in New York, took the lead in traducing Washington and his policy ; and never ceased till he left the administration. In the period, between 1753 and 1797, I am persuaded the slanders and misrepresentations published in those papers would amount to the contents of a large octavo volume.

The freedom of the press is a valuable privilege ; but the abuse of it, in this country, is a frightful evil. The licentiousness of the press is a deep stain upon the character of the country ; and in addition to the evil of calumniating good men, and giving a wrong direction to public measures, it corrupts the people by rendering them insensible to the value of truth and of reputation. Party spirit, indulged to excess has a similar effect, as bigotry in religion, and to blast the reputation of a political adversary, who stands in the way of success, is to do God service. What extreme virulence of partisan malevolence must that have been which could denounce, as traitors to their country, a Washington and a Jay, men of as pure integrity and patriotism, as ever trod the soil of America ! But see the proof. In August 1795 ; the following paragraph appeared in a gazette published in Richmond, Virginia, by one Davis.

“ Notice is hereby given, That in case the treaty entered into by that d——d archtraitor J——n J——y, with the British tyrant, should be ratified, a petition will be presented to the next General Assembly of Virginia, their next session, praying that the said state *may recede from the Union*, and be left under the government and protection of *One hundred thousand free and independent Virginians*.

P. S. As it is the wish of the people of the said State to enter into a treaty of amity, commerce and navigation with any other state or states of the present union, who are averse to returning again under the galling yoke of Great Britain : The printers of the (at present) United States, are requested to publish the above notification.”²

¹ Probably the *Aurora* and the *New York Daily Gazette*. ED.

² See also Noah Webster, *A Collection of Papers on Political, Literary and Moral Subjects* (New York, 1843), 325. ED.

This denunciation was published before the writer knew that President Washington had signed and completed the ratification of the treaty.

But the treaty was ratified and went into operation; and notwithstanding all the French partisans, or democratic party had opposed its ratification, in every way, except by the use of physical force, the treaty proved to be not only the means of preserving peace and amity, with Great Britain, but in a commercial view, it was found to be the best treaty we ever had with a foreign power. Its expiration at the end of ten years was extremely regretted.¹

Now attend to the manner in which the same party treated the great and good Washington.

On the 4th day of March 1797, the day after the last term of Washington's administration expired, the following paragraph appeared in the *Aurora*, the principal paper which had vilified that excellent man for several years.

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," was the pious ejaculation of a man who beheld a flood of happiness rushing in upon mankind. If ever there was a time that would license the reiteration of the exclamation, that time has now arrived; for the man who is the source of all the misfortunes of our country is this day reduced to a level with his fellow citizens, and is no longer possessed of power to multiply evils, upon the United States. If there was ever a period for rejoicing, this is the moment; every heart, in unison with the freedom and happiness of the people, ought to beat high with exultation, that the name of Washington, from this day, ceases to give a currency to political iniquity and to legalize corruption. A new era is now opening upon us; an era which promises much to the people; for public measures must now stand upon their own merits, and nefarious projects can no longer be supported by a name. When a retrospect is taken of the Washingtonian administration for eight years, it is a subject of the greatest astonishment, that a single individual should have cankered the principles of republicanism in an enlightened people, just emerged from the gulf of despotism, and should have carried his designs against the public liberty so far, as to have put in jeopardy its very existence. Such however are the facts, and with these staring us in the face, this day ought to be a jubilee in the United States."²

Is there any way, Sir, to restrain this spirit of slander, which is continually pouring forth libels and defamatory reports against the most intelligent, upright and consistent republican citizen? Must any man and every man, who boldly supports the constitution, according to its true principles, be subjected to insult, and degradation, from intriguers and violent party men? Is there no reward but reproach and infamy, for the purest motives and noblest actions that ever adorn the character of men? I have observed this spirit of calumny and misrepresentation for half a century; I have examined the motives from which it springs, I have seen its effects; and instead of deriving any hopes of reformation from

¹ *Ibid.*, 179-224. ED.

² Bache, at that time the editor of the *Aurora*, was the writer of this article. See my *Spurious Letters attributed to Washington*, 158, note. W. C. F.

the supposed increasing intelligence of the people, recent facts continually occurring have confirmed my apprehensions that the evil admits of no effectual remedy. Some amendments of the constitution may perhaps abate the evil, by restraining the ambition of office-seekers ; but the evil seems to be inseparable from frequent popular elections.

This practice of libeling political opponents, will often drive the best men from public stations, or prevent them from accepting offices ; it will generate the most violent animosities between men who have a common interest in the public welfare, and a common attachment to republican forms of government ; it will sometimes degrade or render odious the *good*, and exalt the *bad* to popularity and to offices of *honor*, which they will *dishonor* by their vices or their weakness. Many of our public evils may be traced to *deception* practiced upon the people, by calumny and misrepresentations. A majority of our citizens have, in some cases, been wholly mistaken in the characters and designs of their favorite leaders, as well as in the true policy of their measures. Some of these mistakes will last during the present generation ; others may be dissipated by the public mischief which they produce.

Of mistakes which pervade a large portion of the community, several instances may be mentioned ; but I shall specify one instance only, which is often a theme of declamation and abuse : this is a misapprehension of the origin and design of the Hartford Convention.¹ I mention this, because I was personally concerned, in the origination of it, and am acquainted with every measure that preceded it, and with the men who were the authors of it. I am the more inclined to state the circumstances of its origin, as they seem not to have been known to those who have written in vindication of the measure.

The Hartford Convention in 1814 has been represented as having for its object a dissolution of the Union : and continued attempts have been made to vilify the men who composed the convention, and thus to destroy their political influence. I *know* the charge against the men concerned in the origin and prosecution of that convention, to be *false*.

The facts respecting the origin of that convention are these. A number of Gentlemen in Northampton, in the county of Hampshire, taking into consideration the distresses of the country, occasioned by the war, and embargo, judged it advisable to invite a meeting of some of the more influential men in the neighboring towns, for the purpose of conversing on the subject, and adopting some measures to manifest the sentiments of the people to the legislature at their approaching session. The result of this conference was, that one of the gentlemen addressed a letter dated January 5, 1814, to several gentlemen in the neighboring towns, requesting them to meet at Northampton on the 19th of that month, "for the purpose of a free and dispassionate discussion touching our public concerns" ; stating also that the legislature which was soon to meet, would probably be gratified to know the feelings and wishes of the people. That letter is now before me.

¹ Cf. Webster, *A Collection of Papers, etc.*, 311-315. ED.

In compliance with that request, several gentlemen met, and after a free conversation on the calamities of the country, they appointed a committee to prepare a circular address to the several towns in the three counties, Hampshire, Hampdon and Franklin, called the Old county of Hampshire. A printed copy of that address is now before me. The chief complaints urged in this address, against the measures of Congress, are the unconstitutionality of the embargo, the distresses resulting from the interruption of our commerce, and the inequality of the representation of the commercial states in Congress. The following are the concluding paragraphs of that circular.

“We forbear to enumerate all the measures of the federal government, which we consider a violation of the constitution and encroachments on the rights of the people, and which bear particularly hard upon the commercial people of the north. But we would invite our fellow citizens to consider, whether peace will remedy our public evils, without some amendments of the constitution, which shall secure to the Northern States, their due weight and influence in our national councils.”

“The Northern States acceded to the representation of slaves, as a matter of compromise, upon the express stipulation in the constitution, that they should be protected in the enjoyment of their commercial rights. These stipulations have been repeatedly violated, and it cannot be expected that the Northern States should be willing to bear their proportion of the burdens of the federal government, without enjoying the benefits stipulated.”

“If our fellow citizens should concur with us in opinion, we would suggest, whether it would not be expedient *for the people in town meetings to address memorials to the General Court at their present session, petitioning that honorable body to propose a convention of all the Northern and Commercial States, by delegates to be appointed by their respective legislatures, to consult upon measures in concert, for procuring such alterations in the federal constitution as will give to the Northern States a due proportion of representation, and secure them from the future exercise of powers injurious to their commercial interests; or if the general court shall see fit, that they would pursue such other course, as they in their wisdom shall deem best calculated to effect the objects.* The measure is of such magnitude that we apprehend a concert of states will be useful, and even necessary to procure the amendments proposed; and should the people of the several towns concur in this opinion, it would be expedient to act on the subject without delay.”

At the time of this meeting I was not a member of the legislature; but I was chosen in the April following.

In compliance with the proposal in this circular, several town meetings were held. In Northampton, a town meeting was held on the 25th of January, in which it was voted to address a memorial to the legislature then in session, on the subject of the public evils. In this memorial, the town prayed the legislature to take measures to obtain amendments to the constitution, *either by a convention of delegates from the Northern and commercial States, or in such other way as should be judged suitable.*

At a town meeting in Hatfield, held on the 28th of January, a memorial of a like tenor was addressed to the General Court, and this con-

tained a like request for a *meeting of delegates from the Northern States* for the same purposes.

A town meeting was held in Deerfield on the 10th of January, which voted a memorial to the General Court, in which the inhabitants petitioned that body to take energetic measures for a redress of grievances.

A town meeting was held in Amherst on the third of January, and resolutions were passed, enumerating the distresses of the country, and directing the representatives of the town in the General Court, to take the most vigorous measures to put an end to a hopeless war.

These applications were made to the legislature then in session, but as negotiations were then on foot for concluding a treaty of peace with Great Britain, it was judged advisable to postpone any action on them during that Session.

But the negotiation was protracted during the following summer ; the affairs of the country grew worse ; our shipping was dismantled and perishing in our harbors ; the public treasury was exhausted ; the banks south and west of New England had suspended specie payments ; the coast of Connecticut was blockaded by British ships ; a part of Maine was in possession of a British force ; and the whole coast of New England was left without any adequate defense. Canada had been invaded and abandoned ; battles had been fought on land without any advantage to the cause ; and excepting the triumphant victories of our frigates, nothing but loss and calamity attended a prosecution of the war.

These circumstances induced Governor Strong to summon a special Session of the General Court in October 1814. At this session, the convention was proposed. I was present when the proposal was made, and when it was debated in the House of Representatives. I believed then as I still believe that the measure was justified by the exigencies of that crisis, and that it had a beneficial effect. The spirit displayed on that occasion must have had a beneficial effect in checking the audacious tyranny which subjected us to the most wanton violations of the constitution in prosecuting an unnecessary and fruitless war — a war that cost the United States a hundred millions of dollars and thirty thousand lives, *without gaining one object* for which it was undertaken. I then considered, and I still consider a combination of the commercial States to recover their rights, and restore the business of the country to its usual channels, as important and as legitimate, as the Union of the Colonies in 1774 to resist the oppressive measures of Great Britain.

The proceedings and result of the Convention are before the public. They were such as to do honor to the members of that patriotic body, and would do honor to the ablest council ever assembled in America. The treaty of peace which soon followed superceded further proceedings.

It will be observed that the first proposals for a convention proceeded from the *people in their primary assemblies*. Not one person in Boston had any concern in those proposals. That the members of the convention, or any of the persons who suggested the resort to a convention, had any views unfriendly to the Union of the States, is a gross calumny,

originating in mere surmise and party jealousy. I heard all that was said at the meeting in Northampton, and at the meeting when the convention was proposed in Boston, and in the debates on the resolution in the House of Representatives; and can affirm that the charges against the convention and those who proposed it, of designs against the constitution, are utterly false and groundless. The object of the people and the measures of the convention were, in my view, as *lawful*, as *constitutional* and as *honorable*, as any that ever characterized the councils of any public body in this country. I knew *all* the gentlemen who first met to consult on the subject; I knew *most* of the members of the convention, and with many of them, I had been intimately acquainted for twenty or thirty years; I have been acquainted with many members of every Congress for more than fifty years, and I can affirm with confidence that no body of men, of the like number, ever convened in this country, have combined more talents, purer integrity, sounder patriotism and republican principles, or more firm attachment to the constitution of the United States, than the gentlemen who composed the Convention.

The history of this convention, Sir, presents full proof that party spirit may impose misrepresentations, upon a *whole people*, and mislead a great portion of them into *opinions directly contrary to facts*. Other instances may be mentioned, which have been equally injurious to the reputation of our best citizens, and even more pernicious to the public welfare. But let this example suffice.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of the high esteem and respect of
Your Obed' Servt

N WEBSTER.

[*Endorsement :*] Letter to Daniel Webster Sept. 6. 1834

I sent this Letter to M^r Webster, without taking a copy — I afterward requested him to return it — which he did after taking a copy for himself.

N WEBSTER.

3. *A Journey from New York to San Francisco in 1850.*

THE following document is a portion of a diary of David Knapp Pangborn, which was kindly furnished to the REVIEW by his granddaughter, Mrs. Winthrop Girling of Chicago, Illinois, in whose possession the original diary now is. The portions of the diary recounting the experiences of the writer after his arrival in San Francisco are not given here, inasmuch as they refer almost exclusively to personal matters without much historical interest.

June 1, 1850. New York.

Left our Dock at 3 P. M. precisely amid the cheers and greetings of thousands which crowded every possible standing place on the pier with one thick mass of human beings.